

Report

Women’s Rights National Historical Park

■ **1.0 Site Description**

Women’s Rights NHP, located in Seneca Falls, New York, commemorates the First Women’s Rights Convention and the early leaders of the women’s rights movement in the United States. Historic sites included in the park boundaries: 1840s Greek Revival home of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, organizer and leader of the women’s rights movement; the Wesleyan Chapel, site of the First Women’s Rights Convention; Declaration Park with a 100-foot water wall engraved with the Declaration of Sentiments and the names of the signers of Declaration; and the M’Clintock house, home of MaryAnn and Thomas M’Clintock, where the Declaration was drafted. In addition, the Park recently acquired the historic Hunt House, in Waterloo, New York, and will be incorporating this site into the Park.

The Visitor Center is located in the center of Seneca Falls in an historic district, where many important sites in the history and current life of the Women’s Rights Movement in the United States are located. These include: the National Women’s Hall of Fame, which records both contemporary and historical information; the New York State Urban Cultural Park, which displays information of importance to Women’s Rights as well as other local history; and the First Presbyterian Church, the site chosen by the Women’s Party in 1923 to introduce the Equal Rights Amendment.

While some of the sites are adjacent to one another, others are located some distance away. The Stanton Home is located 1.5 miles from the Visitor Center, and the McClintock and Hunt homes are located in Waterloo, which is four miles to the west of Seneca Falls.

Other park resources in the area include the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, located six miles to the northeast, and the Seneca State Park and Cayuga Lake State Park, located on either end of the Cayuga-Seneca Canal, which connects the two lakes and runs through Seneca Falls. Finally, the home of Harriet Tubman is located in Auburn, New York, 15 miles to the east.

At present, most park visitors arrive by private automobile and tour bus. During the summer months, area bicycle tours stop at the site, and on rare occasions, visitors arrive by boat via the canal.

■ 2.0 Existing ATS

There are no systems currently in place at Women’s Rights NHP. There is a freight rail track that runs through both Seneca Falls and Waterloo, owned by Finger Lakes Railway, Inc. During the fall foliage season, there are occasional passenger tours operated on this rail line.

■ 3.0 ATS Needs

Given the spacing of the sites, it would be highly desirable to offer visitors an alternative means of transportation. A shuttle service would be perceived as an excellent benefit to the visitor experience. Other areas of Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS)-related needs revolve around signage, where enhancements to improve information would be desirable. Current signs must conform to historic district regulations, which can make them somewhat harder to see.

■ 4.0 Basis ATS Needs

As with other historical parks in the system that contain independent sites, having visitors travel among sites on their own can reduce the interpretive experience. In the case of the Women’s Rights NHP, a shuttle service that operated between Waterloo and Seneca Falls, operated as a tram system by a concessionaire, could have considerable interpretive benefit. Given the other recreational and historical resources in the area, it would also make sense to include some of these sites on any historical tours.

■ 5.0 Person Interviewed

Josie Fernandez, Superintendent, Women’s Rights National Historical Park